

2019 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Livermore Railroad Depot Relocation and Rehabilitation



The Livermore Railroad Depot, built by Southern Pacific in 1892, served as the city's depot into the early 1960s. The Depot was modified and remodeled several times during its most active period from 1892 to 1942, and was further altered after ownership transferred from Southern Pacific in 1973.

After a series of private owners, the City of Livermore Redevelopment Agency acquired the Depot in 2007. By the time the Relocation and Rehabilitation Project began, the building featured insensitive additions, loss of several historic windows and doors, and a non-historic paint scheme. The integrity of the building was further compromised by a loss of context from the relocation of the train tracks in the 1970s and the redevelopment of the area around the Depot, leaving the building in the middle of a commercial parking lot.

In general, the relocation of historic structures is discouraged due to the associated loss of integrity caused by the move. In the case of the Livermore Depot, however, the project team believed that the restoration of a more historic context in association with the current railroad tracks and transit, and use once again as a transit ticketing office and waiting area would be a net positive for the treatment of the building and its integrity of feeling and association.

The scope of the project included selective demolition of non-historic additions and preparation of the building for relocation to the new site. In designing the rehabilitation of the building, every effort was made to find as much historic documentation as possible to understand the changes over time and design any interventions to be compatible with historic architectural features of the building.

Rehabilitation work included restoration of the original redwood exterior siding; repair and replication of wood windows, doors and architectural details including roof cresting and replica chimneys; and rehabilitation of existing historic finishes at the interior of the building. Uncovering of original historic materials helped confirm the accuracy of the exterior finish schemes as well.

From the time that the Southern Pacific Railroad closed the Livermore Depot in 1973, the community has rallied around the building and championed its preservation. Members of the Livermore Heritage Guild were deeply involved in the details of the rehabilitation, sharing their research and archival materials. Additionally, when the Depot originally closed, many long-time Livermore residents salvaged and preserved significant features of the building, including a historic clock and other artifacts. Many of these items were donated to the rehabilitation project and are incorporated into the historical display within the waiting area of the building.

The affection that many residents of Livermore have for the depot is due in part to the significance of railroads and the Depot in the development of Livermore as a city. By connecting the area that is now Livermore to the rest of the Bay Area and lands beyond, the Depot facilitated the development of the city around it. The rehabilitated structure is part of a renaissance of rail transportation throughout the state; it serves once again as part of a rail system connecting Livermore to the greater Bay Area. Furthermore, it stands as testament to a community's pride in and engagement with its past.